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ABSTRACT

Presenting the full range of students' writing, this paper provides administrators, teachers, and students with samples of students' writing that exemplify the criteria used to score responses to the June 1992 Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test. After an introductory section, the paper presents a general commentary; the writing assignment; samples of students' "ideas/planning pages," first drafts, and final drafts at each of five levels of writing achievement; and a discussion of developmental issues. The scoring guide for the composition part of the test is attached. (RS)

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ED 363 888

# *Samples of Students' Writing*

## *from the Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test June 1992*

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This document was written primarily for:

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Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test
*Part A: Composition*, Scoring Guide, June 1992

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# *Introduction*

### *Purpose*

The purpose of this document is to provide administrators, teachers, and students with samples of students' writing that exemplify the criteria used to score students' written responses on the June 1992 Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test. Examples of the full range of students' writing are provided.

### *Content*

The Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test consisted of two booklets: *Part A: Composition* and *Part B: Reading*. This document deals with *Part A: Composition*, which required students to complete a writing assignment based on a written and visual prompt. Each sample paper in this document has been reproduced as it appeared to the markers, that is, in the student's own handwriting. Accompanying each student's response is a discussion relating the characteristics of the response to the descriptors in the scoring guide. The scoring guide is reproduced in the Appendix, pages 31 to 36.

### *Selection of Papers*

The papers selected for this document were used as samples for training markers during the July 1992 marking session. As such, these papers generally illustrate the quality of students' work at each of the five levels of accomplishment described in the scoring guide. These, along with the additional papers and excerpts of student writing, were selected as examples for use in classroom instruction.

### *Confirming Standards*

The initial work of confirming the standards that governed the scoring of the June 1992 writing assignment was undertaken by a group of experienced Grade 6 English Language Arts teachers during the week of June 29, 1992. Their task was to read a large enough sample of papers to find exemplars of the full range of the marking criteria. These teachers also suggested adjustments to the scoring guide where needed to facilitate the marking of the assignment. They selected papers that were illustrative of the various scoring descriptors.

The second step in confirming standards involved a day-long session for teachers who were specially selected to serve as leaders of small groups of markers. These teachers reviewed the sample papers selected during the process of confirming standards and endorsed them as appropriate examples of the various scores possible, thus setting the marking criteria so that they were consistent with expectations for writing in Grade 6 English Language Arts.

### *Marking*

Teachers were selected for marking on the recommendation of their superintendents. All markers were teaching Grade 6 English Language Arts in the same school year that the test was administered and had done so for at least two years. The markers spent the first hours of the marking period in an intensive training session, which included a review of the scoring descriptors as they related to the representative papers previously selected by those teachers confirming standards and endorsed by the group leaders. These papers are discussed in the pages that follow.

Neither the name of the student nor the name of the school appeared on the test papers. Markers were advised not to mark a paper if they suspected that they recognized its source. They were instructed to disregard the quality of handwriting when evaluating the papers and to return a paper unmarked if they thought the handwriting would influence their judgment. When the writer had not

completed the final draft, markers referred to the planning and drafting pages to add to their understanding of the writer's intent. No marks were placed on the students' written work during the marking process. Papers were read by one marker, although a random sample of papers was read a second time to establish inter-rater reliability.

The range of quality of students' writing was scored as follows: **(5) Excellent**, **(4) Proficient**, **(3) Satisfactory**, **(2) Limited**, and **(1) Poor**. Each paper was assessed on this five-point scale for specific qualities within five reporting categories: *Content*, *Organization*, *Sentence Structure*, *Vocabulary*, and *Conventions*. The marks for *Content* and *Organization* were then multiplied by two, doubling their weight in relation to the other three categories.

Periodically throughout the marking session, a reliability review process was undertaken. All markers were required to read and score an example paper that had previously been scored by those teachers who had assisted in the confirming standards process. In small groups, markers then discussed and commented on the scores they had assigned. Scores were compared with and discussed in relation to the standards relevant to expectations and to the previously assigned mark. This process was repeated every morning and afternoon, further ensuring marker reliability.

### *Cautions*

The following cautions should be kept in mind when reading this document or when using its contents for instructional planning:

1. These sample papers reflect an interpretation of the curriculum by which teachers established standards specifically for the July 1992 marking session. The interpretation of the standards and the judgments made by the markers at the time may vary with other writing assignments and with writing completed under different circumstances. Therefore, these samples should be considered in that context when used as instructional models of writing. They are intended to help teachers and students indentify strengths and weaknesses in classroom writing and in this way improve students' writing overall.

2. Readers should consider each student's accomplishments in light of the constraints of test writing. Under test-writing conditions, students produce writing that must be considered as first-draft only. When students write under conditions that permit discussion, review, and reflection, they may produce work that differs substantially from what is illustrated here.

## *General Commentary*

When the entire range of papers produced on the June 1992 Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test is viewed, several observations may be made about how Grade 6 students managed the assigned writing task. The papers are a source of information about approaches students take to planning and drafting their writing. Indications of how students develop as writers are also present. The following discussion is offered to teachers concerned with these issues and with their implications.

Markers were pleased to note that the general quality of writing by Grade 6 students appears to have been maintained. Students were able to establish and sustain a purpose for their writing, and they exhibited a clear idea of storyline development, with an awareness of the need to sequence events and details. In some cases, students needed to pay more attention to the development of purposeful, focused introductions and conclusions. Although students often tried to embed multiple ideas into sentences, markers noted the predominance of simple sentences and a corresponding lack of

variety in sentence type or length. In most responses, general rather than specific vocabulary was chosen, but marker comments indicated that students seemed more willing to attempt specific vocabulary choices than they had on past achievement tests. Control over conventions (mechanics and grammatical construction) was evident in most papers, although some basic errors were noted. As in previous years, students encountered pronoun-antecedent problems and experienced difficulties maintaining control over tense. Students used quotation marks well and when spelling errors occurred, they were generally quite phonetic.

Teachers can help students with writing by setting up many and various encounters with literature in the classroom. They can also help students explore the techniques and strategies authors use in their writing. As well, teachers can help students to fulfill their intentions by providing instruction, adequate time, and occasion for writing in the classroom. They can also assist students in learning how to address specific features of writing.

In testing situations, such as this one, students must draw on their knowledge and experience in order to respond to the assigned task. The range and extent of students' experiences are evident in their imaginative responses to the writing assignment. Students created contexts that reflected personal life experinces as well as encounters with text and with the media. Many borrowed elements from Nintendo-type games, movie plots, or television shows. In the classroom, teachers can help students by confirming that students' own experiences, interests, and observations are valuable and are the best foundations on which to build their writing. Teachers can also help students by building a background for writing about less familiar topics and by assisting students in focusing their writing.

## *The Writing Assignment*

**GRADE 6 ACHIEVEMENT TEST**
**ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS**

**Part A: Composition**

### TO THE TEACHER:

Please read the instructions on this page to your students. Then have the students turn to page 2 and follow along as **YOU READ** the writing prompt and assignment to them.

### DESCRIPTION

- In this test, there is a writing prompt and a picture for you to write about.
- You have 80 minutes to complete your composition.

### GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

- Choose the writing format (story, letter, or a series of diary/journal entries) that will allow you to do your best writing.
- Jot down your ideas and/or make a plan before you write. Do this on the **IDEAS/PLANNING** page.
- Draft your work on the pages labelled **FIRST DRAFT/ROUGH COPY.**
- Write your good copy in **BLUE** or **BLACK INK** on the pages labelled **FINAL DRAFT/GOOD COPY.** Write a title for your composition in the place indicated.
- Remember that you may make changes and corrections on your **FINAL DRAFT/GOOD COPY.**
- You may use an **ENGLISH LANGUAGE DICTIONARY** and/or a **THESAURUS.**
- Your work will be evaluated on **WHAT** you say and **HOW WELL** you say it (on **CONTENT, ORGANIZATION, SENTENCE STRUCTURE, VOCABULARY,** and **CONVENTIONS**).

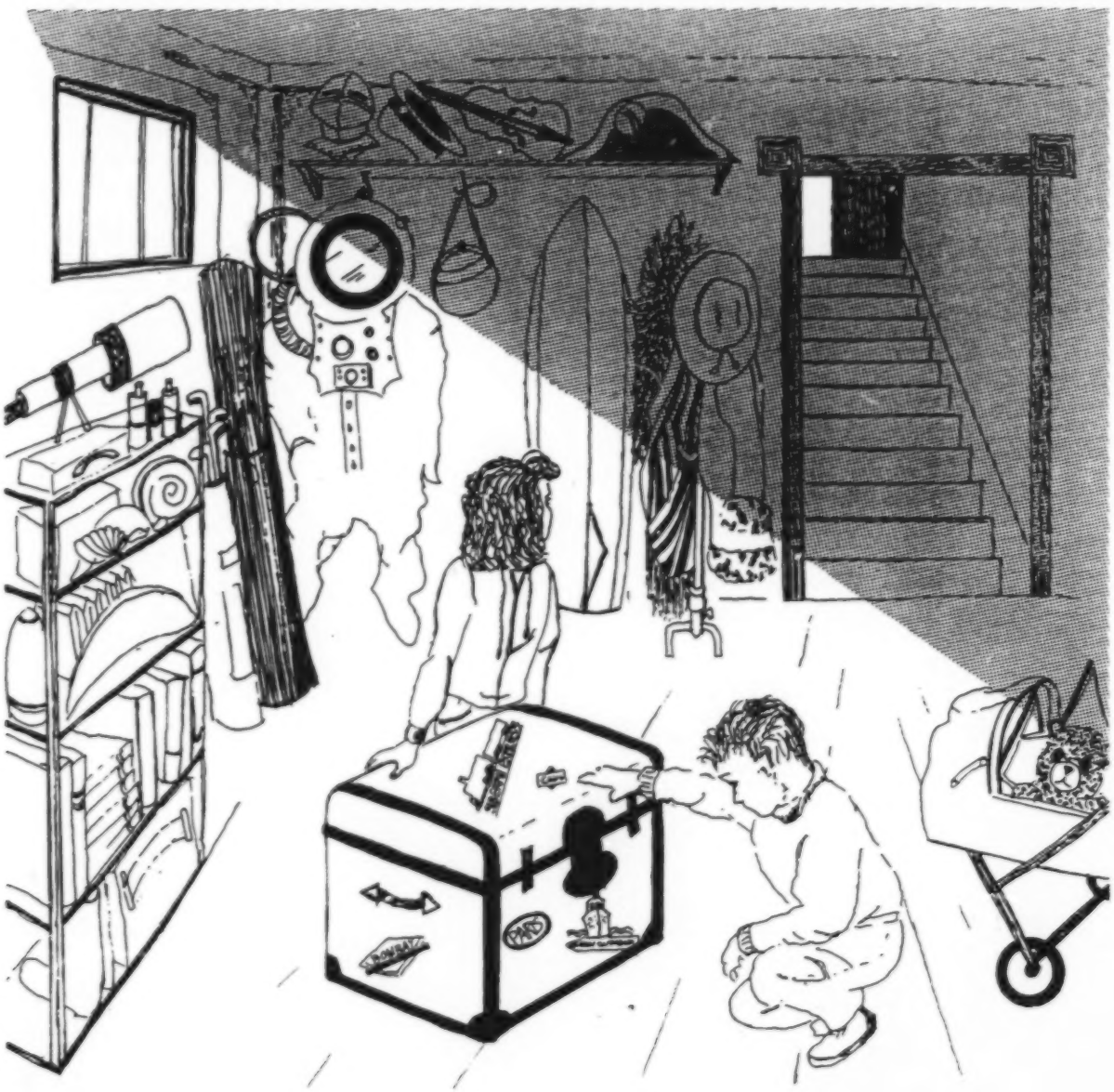
**JUNE 1992**

**IMAGINE . . .**

Two friends are exploring a cluttered, old basement when they find a mysterious-looking trunk. Suddenly, footsteps echo on the floorboards above!

**WHAT HAPPENS?**

Use the picture below to help you imagine what happens. Choose the writing format (story, letter, or a series of diary/journal entries) that will allow you to do your best writing.





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# *Samples of Students' Writing*

### *Student Sample A*

In this paper, the writer's strong sense of voice and entertaining use of humor maintain the reader's interest. The paper is representative of **(5) Excellent**.

The Trunk.
(Title)

Dear Diary,

I'm writing this in a trunk! Bobby and I were downstairs seeing if we could use anything for our halloween costumes when we found this trunk. It was gold and brown and it looked like a treasure chest. We heard a window broke and footsteps running on the floor above. Looking at each other we made hand signals and decided to hide in the trunk. The trunk is pretty big and could easily fit two twelve year olds, even me and I'm ten pounds overweight. The footsteps got louder and we heard a voice, "Bill this is a great place to hide, nobody's here and there is food in the fridge." they chuckled. I thought to myself, Oh my god Bobby's house is being used as a hide-out for criminals. Bobby and I were really frightened. Among other things, I always carry a pocket flashlight, a pencil and pad in my hipsac so naturally I started writing. See, when I'm older I'm going to be a writer and I figure a journal is as good a way as any to start. This trunk is in the corner behind some clothes hanging on a rack. We heard cupboards and the fridge open and close. Then they came downstairs and the basement door closed with them inside.

*Content*

The writer's purpose, to recount the events of this adventure, is clearly established early in the piece. A unique style is developed through the use of an informal, conversational tone.

This writer has done more than just order a series of events. Carefully chosen details are used to create suspense. At the time of their adventure, the children are looking for Hallowe'en costumes; the trunk resembles a treasure chest; a fragment of an ominous-sounding conversation is overheard; and, no parents are close at hand to help the children.

As the story progresses and the plot is advanced, the writer pays attention to character development. Anecdotal family background information, which has been inserted into the main story, helps to define the writer's unique style. Given the main character's development as a highly imaginative child, events in the story are feasible and believable. Details such as the hipsac's contents and Bobby's upset stomach while in the claustrophobic trunk are plausible within the story.

The brevity of the piece does not compromise the writer's imaginative story development.

*Organization*

Interest and suspense are immediately created with the opening statement "I'm writing this in a

Bobby was sleeping or he had fainted so I grabbed his wrist and I looked at his watch. It was 12:00 pm. Great! Six hours before my parents get home and discover I'm missing! Never before have I looked forward to my parents coming home. They go away alot, you see, my Dads a pilot and my Mum is a stewardess. The met each other on an airplane. They think its very romantic, I think its disgusting. They are both tall, thin, blonde and tanned. I have no idea how they ended up with me, I have brown hair, pale skin and I'm short and fat. Apparently I look like my fathers father. Lucky me! Anyway I, Oh my lord! I have just had a terrifying thought, what if one of us have to go to the bathroom! Well, um, we'll just have to, um.... deal with that when it happens. Bobby just woke up. "Did you faint?" I whispered. "I dont know," he answered, he looked kind of sick then all of a sudden he vomitted all over himself! Greess! I couldn't stand the smell, I had to get out! I jumped up from the trunk and I pulled Bobby with me. There on the couch sat Bobby's elder brother and his friend eating junkfood and watching tv. "Oh, hi Bob, Ew you stink! What happened? Oh, by the way don't tell Mum we're in here, we broke the window!" WHY ME?!?...

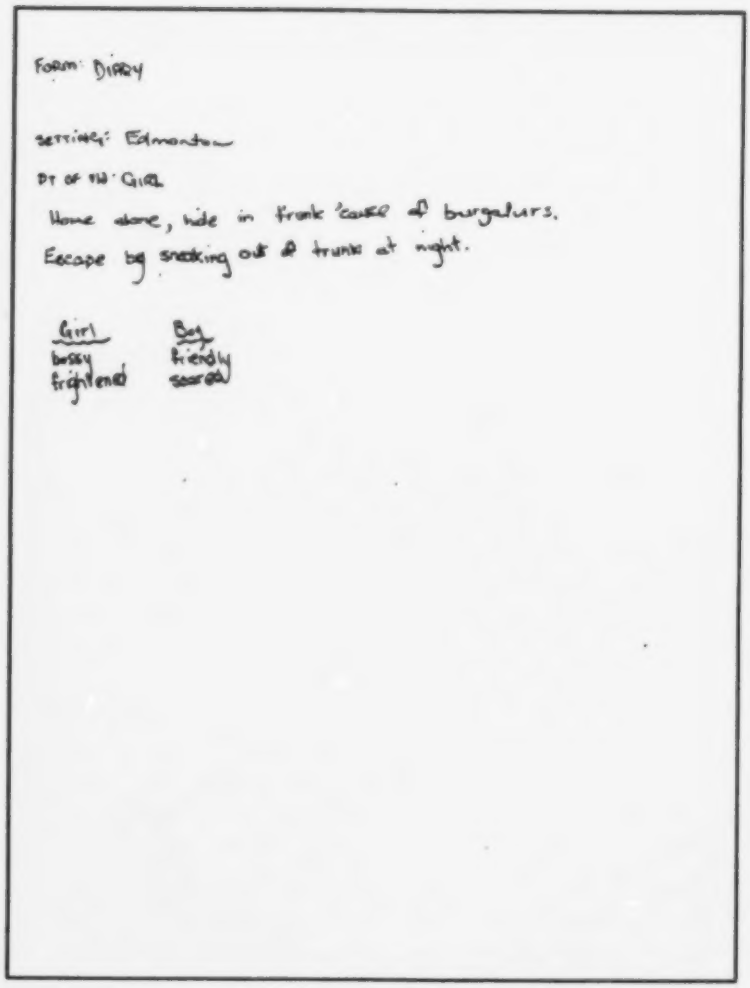
trunk!" It captures the reader's attention and establishes a focus that the writer sustains throughout the piece. A structured plot is clearly discernible: the writer presents a problem, creates suspense, provides a climax, and a resolution.

Cohesion is maintained throughout the piece by the development of an unusual character in an unusual circumstance. Events are carefully ordered, although the plot is not so much dependent on specific events as it is on the main character's wild imaginings. Character is developed when the writer intersperses personal digressions among comments on external events. These meanderings, which make the main character seem flighty and impulsive, also serve to add plausibility to the main character's hasty conclusion that criminals are using the house as a hideout.

Transitions occur smoothly. Thoughts are not thrown together randomly; rather, they are carefully linked together. For example, immediately after noting the time, the main character realizes that it will be "Six hours before my parents get home," thereby introducing the parents and linking the "six hours" back to the time. The parents are linked to the current situation when, in the next sentence, the writer looks forward to their "coming home." This leads to an account of why the parents go away, and finally to some of their history. The writer has moved from the main plot to digressive information without jarring the reader.

Closure is directly related to the story and, because the focus has been sustained throughout the writing, it is also linked strongly to the introduction.

IDEAS/PLANNING




*Sentence Structure*

This writer is able to manipulate sentence structure and to take liberties with it. The sentence fragment "Six hours before my parents get home and discover I'm missing!" is very effective within the context the writer has created. Similarily, comma splices are successfully used to sustain the conversational tone. An example is the sentence "They think its very romantic, I think it's disgusting."

The writer also uses interesting sentence openings, such as "Never before have I looked" and "There on the couch." Short, simple sentences such as "Lucky me!" and "I(t) was 12:00 p.m." are skillfully employed. An introductory phrase is used in the sentence beginning "Among other things" and sentence variety is also evident when subordination is used in the sentence beginning "See, when I'm older."

*Vocabulary*

This writer attempts to develop a relaxed, colloquial style by carefully choosing words and expressions with an awareness of their effect. The writer successfully replicates speech through inclusion of expletives such as "Great!" and "Gross!" and interjections such as "you see" and "um." Vocabulary is natural, expressive, and age appropriate.

To support the casual narrative style, most of the verbs the writer uses are "chatty." When specific verbs are used in this context, they are highly effective: "chuckled" takes on a sinister tone, "grabbed" makes the main character sound desperate, and "vomitted" seems vividly realistic.

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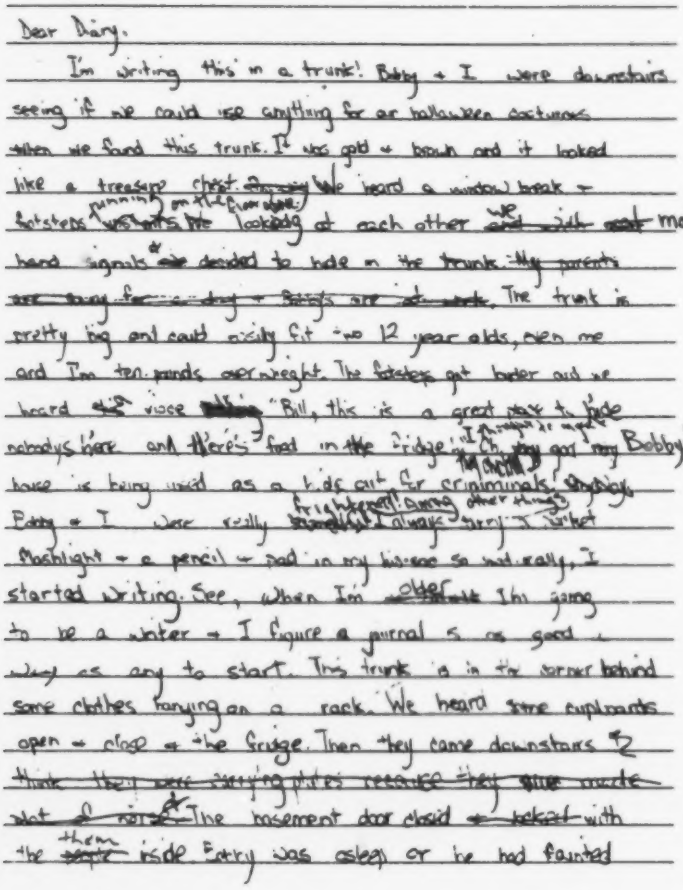

Dear Diary.

I'm writing this in a trunk! Bobby + I were downstairs seeing if we could use anything for our halloween costumes when we found this trunk. It was gold + brown and it looked like a treasure chest. Anyway we heard a window break + footsteps running on the floorboards. We looked at each other and made hand signals we decided to hide in the trunk. My parents are away for a day + Bobby's are at work. The trunk is pretty big and could easily fit two 12 year olds, even me and I'm ten pounds overweight. The footsteps got louder and we heard voices. "Bill, this is a great place to hide nobodys here and there's food in the fridge." Oh, by the way I got my Bobby's house is being used as a hide-out for criminals. Anyway, Bobby + I were really frightened. I always carry other things I thought to myself flashlight + a pencil + pad in my backpack so not really, I started writing. See, when I'm older I'm going to be a writer + I figure a journal is as good a way as any to start. This trunk is in the corner behind some clothes hanging on a rack. We heard some cupboards open + close + the fridge. Then they came downstairs to think they were carrying plates because they made alot of noise. The basement door closed + locked with them the key inside. Bobby was asleep or he had fainted

Noun and descriptive word choices are appropriate and support the effect created by this writer. The choice of "father's father" rather than "grandfather" is both precise and effective.

When the main character's parents are described, the use of simple adverbs evokes a clear image. This is an effective contrast to the description of the main character's own physical attributes.

*Conventions*

This writer exhibits good control of the conventions of language. The spelling errors that occur are letter reversals—"overwieght"—or incorrect consonant doublings—"crimminals." Twice an incorrect choice of word is made—"brake" for "break" and "foreword" for "forward".

The missing apostrophes in "Dads" and "its" appear to be errors in transcribing from the first draft, and the use of "alot" for "a lot" is a minor error and does not detract from the writing.

This writer appears to have difficulty with comma use; however, this may be intentionally stylistic. Commas are occasionally missing, such as at the end of the parenthetical in the sentence beginning "Oh, by the way don't."

The writer uses quotation marks well. A singular exception occurs when the writer does not use quotation marks to enclose the thought in the sentence "I thought to myself, Oh my god. Bobby's house is being used as a hide-out for crimminals." Since this is not dialogue a student might ordinarily use, it is not surprising that the writer was unsure of how to deal with it.



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so I grabbed his wrist and looked at his watch. It said 11:30 a.m. Great! A whole day before my parents get home. Never before have I looked forward to my parents return. They go away alot, you see, my Dad's a pilot & my Mum is a stewardess. They met each other on an airplane. They think it's very romantic, I think it's disgusting. They both are tanned with blonde hair & blue eyes and they are thin. I have no idea how they ended up with me. I have messy brown hair blue eyes & pale skin. Apparently I look like my father's father. Lucky me! Anyway they are supposed to be home in 7 hours, and, oh my lord I have just had the most terrifying thought, what if one of us have to go to the bathroom! Calm down! We'll just have to um... deal with that when it happens. Bobby just woke up. "Did you faint?" I whispered. "I don't know", he answered. He looked kind of sick. Then all of a sudden he vomited all over himself. Gross! I couldn't stand the smell. I had to get out. I jumped up from the trunk & pulled him out with me. There on the couch watching tv and eating junkfood sat Bobby's older brother - his friend. "Oh, hi Bob. Ew you stink! What happened? Oh by the way don't tell Mum we're in here we broke her... window!" Why me?!?!

Although this writing contains convention errors, they do not reduce the clarity of the communication. Given the time constraints, it is likely that the writer was more concerned with refining the chatty, colloquial presentation of the piece than with monitoring the convention errors.

*Planning and Drafting*

This writer uses the Ideas/Planning page to sketch out basics of the story. The headings "Form," "Setting," and "PT of VW" (Point of View) give details, two statements outline the plot, and a chart briefly lists characteristics of the two main characters. The writer has made numerous revisions on the first draft, and the result is a proficient final draft.



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***Student Sample B***

This writer creates believable characters who behave in a realistic manner. The story is logically ordered and well focused. It is representative of a **(4) Proficient**.

The Secrets Of The Old Trunk
(Title)

"Oh my God," whispered Brenda, "what are we going to do now?"
"I am not sure," Dylan replied, "Why not look in the trunk?"
"Sure!"
Brenda and Dylan looked all over the trunk to see if there was a padlock on it. Good thing there was no lock because they did not have a key for it.
They both slowly lifted the top of the trunk to open.
"What are these?" asked Brenda.
"They looked like pictures to me," replied Dylan.
"Who are these people? They do not look like anyone of my family," explained Brenda.
"Maybe you just donot know them."
They both kept on searching through the trunk and next they found a letter. Brenda read aloud:
Dearest Margery,
I am sorry to leave you like this but I had no choice. The army had already sent for me. I did not want to tell you. Please remember me in all that you do.
Love, Henry.
"Who is Margery and Henry?" asked Dylan after Brenda finished reading the letter.

*Content*

The writer's purpose, to reveal the secrets of the old trunk, is established and then sustained throughout the piece. Dialogue is frequently used to reveal details about the articles the children find, as in the example, "'Now, this could have been my grandmother's dress!'" Details used are usually specific and relate to the contents of the trunk as well as to the establishment of the ancestor/ghost theme. An exception is the book, which, while it was found in the trunk, is not related to the story development.

The dialogue of the characters, though occasionally sounding stilted, is believable and their actions reflect the natural curiousity expected from children looking through a mysterious trunk.

The events are appropriate and relevant, but their presentation sometimes seems to slow the pace of story. Given the limited number of articles in the trunk, the repeated description of the children as "searching through the trunk" seems ponderous and stilted. The climax of the story, when Dylan tries to get out of the basement, is not exciting and does not engage the reader.

This writer has attempted to go beyond the basic requirements of the assignment and create a mood for the story. Effective, appropriate ideas and details have been used, and the purpose has been achieved. However, the writing lacks emotion and does not allow the writer's voice to come through.



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"I do not know. Maybe they were my great-grandmother's friends or something like that." replied Brenda.

They continued searching through the trunk again. Brenda found this huge, pink old-fashioned dress.

"Now, this could have been my grandmother's dress!" exclaimed Brenda.

There was only one item left in the trunk. It was an old book. It read: Moby Dick.

"Why is this in here?" asked Dylan.

"I am not sure," replied Brenda. All of the sudden, Brenda and Dylan's shadows were moving. They were forming into ghosts.

"Oh, Lord, what is happening now?" asked Brenda.

"Ahh!" Dylan screamed.

They both ran up the stairs. Dylan was trying to turn the doorknob. Soon he would have almost pulled the knob off of the door. All of the sudden, Brenda's father opened it.

"What are you kids doing now?" asked Mr. Walsh.

"Dad, there were ghosts and a trunk!" cried Brenda.

"Let me go check it out!" laughed Mr. Walsh.

"Look over ...," Brenda stalled.

"You kids!" laughed Mr. Walsh.

There was nothing there. The trunk was gone.

"But there was something, Dad!" Brenda yelled.

"You kids and your imagination

12

*Organization*

The introduction is purposeful and clearly establishes a focus. However, the attempt to create a mood of mystery in the opening sentence is somewhat melodramatic and falls flat when the next sentence reveals that no crisis is occurring. This attempt to create suspense suffers further in the next passage. The writer fails to capture the reader's attention with interesting dialogue and the two children appear inept rather than engaging, as they look for a non-existent padlock before even trying to open the trunk.

Transitions are logical, and the story moves easily through carefully ordered events. The ancestor idea is introduced gradually as the children find and examine old articles in the trunk. Notwithstanding the supernatural aspects, the writer has considered cause and effect in ordering the events; for example, when the father opens the door to the basement, he is likely responding to Dylan's scream a moment earlier.

Focus is maintained throughout the piece, and the conclusion is linked to the rest of the story. The closure is not strong and is somewhat predictable; however, it is appropriate and amusing, and attempts to maintain the mood the writer sought to achieve.

*Sentence Structure*

In this writing, sentence type is usually effective and there is an interesting variety of sentence length. Although sentence type is limited, the writer creates the impression of variety through the extensive use of dialogue and through the use of colons to introduce the letter and the title of the book. This use of colons and an ellipsis also shows that the writer has attempted to create suspense through sentence control.



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**IDEAS/PLANNING**

- they find a letter, old clothes, photos, and an old book.
- the door closes and it locks. They can't get out.
- old ghosts surround them.

**FIRST DRAFT/ROUGH COPY**

"Oh my God," whispered Brenda, "what are we going to do now?"

"I am not sure," Dylan replied, "why don't look in the trunk."

"Sure."

Brenda and Dylan looked all over the trunk to see if there was a lock on it. Good thing there was no lock because they did not have the key for it.

Soon they opened up the trunk.

"What are these!" asked Brenda

"They look like pictures," answered Dylan.

"Who are these people? They cannot be any of my relatives," explained Brenda

"Maybe you just don't know them."

They both kept on searching through the trunk they found a letter Brenda read aloud.

Dearest Margary,

I am sorry to leave you like this but I had no choice. The Army had already sent for me. I did not want to tell you. Please remember me in all that you do.

Love, Henry

"Who is Margary and Henry?" asked Dylan after Brenda finished the note.

*Vocabulary*

Although sentences such as "'I do not know'" and "'I am not sure'" sound stilted and awkward, in other places the writer succeeds in making dialogue sound more natural. The colloquial "'Oh, Lord, what is happening now?'" and "'You kids!'" show that, even though inconsistent, a growing understanding of realistic dialogue is evident.

Verb choices such as "exclaimed," "whispered," and "laughed" that describe dialogue are generally varied and precise, although occasional weaknesses do occur. For example, "*explained* Brenda" after "'Who are these people? They do not look like anyone of my family'" is not as effective as some of the other verb choices.

Occasional errors are made in the writer's choice of articles, such as the incorrect use of "this" before "huge, pink old-fashioned dress." This writer's misuse of "the" in place of "a" in the phrase "all of the sudden" was a common error seen in many other students' writing.

Generally, words and expressions are chosen accurately with some regard to their connotative effect. The use of the sentence "'Please remember me in all that you do,'" which would more likely be found in written than in spoken language, shows that the writer is aware of this difference in use.

*Conventions*

This writing has few errors in conventions. The one incorrect use of "is" in place of "are" and the spelling "donot" are minor errors and do not detract from the writing, nor do the occasional punctuation errors.



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I don't know. Maybe they were my great-grandmother's friends or something like that." replied Brenda.

They continued searching through the trunk. Brenda found this huge, pink old-fashioned dress.

"Wow, this could have been my grandmother's dress!" exclaimed Brenda. There was only one item left in the trunk. It was an old book. It read Moby Dick.

"Why is this in here? asked Dylan

"I am not sure." replied Brenda. All of the sudden, Brenda and Dylan's shadows were moving. They were forming into ghosts

"Oh Lord, what is happening now?" asked Brenda.

"Ahh!" Dylan screamed.

They both ran up the stairs. Dylan was trying to turn the knob so fast he was almost pulling it off the door. All of the sudden, Brenda's father opened it.

"What are you kids doing now?" Mr Walsh asked.

"Dad, there were ghosts and a trunk!" cried Brenda

"Let me go check it out!" laughed Mr. Walsh.

"Look over th—," Brenda stalled.

"You kids" laughed Mr. Walsh. "There was nothing there. The trunk was gone.

"But there was something, Dad." Brenda yelled

"You kids and your imagination!"

The writer attends well to dialogue punctuation. The only lapse occurs after the last word of the piece, where end punctuation is missing. Given the absence of error elsewhere in the writing, this omission is likely an oversight.

The dialogue punctuation is handled very well, and a low proportion of convention errors would be anticipated given that the writer takes few vocabulary risks and has not attempted many challenging sentence structures.

*Planning and Drafting*

Brief points serve to summarize the writer's plan for the beginning and middle of the story. The ending has not been planned. The revised copy of this story is practically identical to the rough draft. For this student, writing a revised copy provided an opportunity to improve penmanship rather than to revise or edit.

***Student Sample C***

**This writing presents a discernible plot which, although easy to follow, fails to capture the reader's attention. It is representative of a (3) Satisfactory.**

The Mission
(Title)

The steps got slower and creepier. Then there was a women ~~stood~~ standing ~~at the~~ in the door way.
"Christine are you down there?"
Few! It was just my mom.
"Yes mom, I'm down here." I said.
"I am going to go to the grocery store to get some things. O.K.?" my mom said.
"O.K. But is it O.K. if Mike stays over untill you get back?" I asked
"Fine."

As soon as ~~the~~ my mom left I stared at the mysterious trunk wondering ~~the~~ what was in it. Then I saw a little key taped on to the trunk. I took it off and opened the trunk. A bright shinned from it. Mike noticed a stairway leading down into the trunk. So we decided to go down into it. When

*Content*

The writer's purpose, which initially is to explore the "mysterious trunk" without interference by the mother, is not sustained. After the characters are in the trunk, the purpose seems to be to "kill the enemy's" and return home. Once this shift in purpose occurs, the rest of the piece sounds like a contrived retelling of a Nintendo game. Within this video world, there is no motivation for the story action, no reason for the "mission," and no explanation for its violent nature.

Certainly this writer has established a fantasy world where conventional reality need not always apply and although this justifies some latitude, it cannot provide grounds for a complete lack of plausibility. The stairs and weapons disappear and reappear at convenient, though not necessarily logical times, and the children are quite capable of shooting and killing "enemies" they have never heard of. As with many of the stories in the **(3) Satisfactory** range, the writer provides details to support the story but fails to develop them. In this writing, no explanation is given as to why, when, or how the trunk appeared in the basement of the home.

*Organization*

The writer attempts to set a mood of mystery by opening the story with a woman startling the heroine, "Christine." The woman is then revealed as Christine's mother. The writer may have thought this would create a humorous effect, but the mundane, stilted conversation serves more to break the suspense than to amuse the reader. As well, this introduction is not

we got to the bottom of the stairs the stairs disappeared.
"Great, now what are we going to do? We're stuck here," said Mike.
Mike and christine looked around and noticed everything had ~~changed~~ ~~shor~~ shrunk. Then they heard a voice and it said,
"Your mission is to go through the maze and kill the enemy's and then you can return to your home." then the voice faded away.
"So we are in like a...a... video game, or something?" I said trembling on every word.
"Come on it will be fun." said Mike as he ran to the starting line. At the beggining Mike and christine found some weapons.
"Oh so this is what we use to kill the enemies, right?" I said.
"I guess so." said Mike.
Then we went. the maze was easy but it was hard to kill the enemies. Even ~~thought~~ thaught everything was ~~shrunk~~ shrunk it still looked big. we were close to the end.

But then we had to fight a big prickly enemy. It was the only way to get home. I knew because ~~the~~ I saw the stairs behind him. Everytime I shot him he would fad away. He was so fadded that we ran right throught him and we went up the stairs. When we got to the top of the trunk the trunk and the guns disappeared.

THE
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sufficiently linked to the main plot.

Although the first sentence of the second paragraph provides a satisfactory transition from the introduction to the main plot, other transitions are generally weak as the action moves quickly from one event to the next. After just entering the maze, the characters are suddenly "close to the end." Closure seems to be nothing more than a contrived and expediant way for the writer to finish the story. Coherence also falters when point of view changes from first person to third person in the middle of the piece and when the writer's intent seems confused in the sentence "Even though everything was shrunk it still looked big."

*Sentence Structure*

Sentence structure is generally controlled but not highly effective, as the sentences used in this writing are similar in structure and length. What little variety there is occurs mainly in the opening section. The only run-on sentence, which begins "Then they heard a voice" may have occurred because the writer attempted to place dialogue in the middle of a sentence. The writer has successfully used the construction "'in like a...a...video'" for effect. "And," "but," and "then" are the conjuntions used most often. The majority of sentences are either simple or compound.

*Vocabulary*

"Trembling on every word" and "prickly enemy" show that occasional attempts are made to choose specific words. However, most of this writing offers only general words and expressions which are consistently used accurately.

**IDEAS/PLANNING**

BEGINING – find ~~trunk~~ trunk
MIDDLE – open it. They go into the trunk.
END – They come out of it. The trunk Dissappears

**FIRST DRAFT/ROUGH COPY**

The steps got slower and ~~creepier~~ creepier. Then there ~~was~~ was a women standing at the door way.
"Christine are you down there?"
Fewl it was just my mom.
"Yes mom, I'm down here." I said
"I am going to go to the ~~gr~~ grocery store to get some things O.K.?" my mom said
"O.K. But is it O.K. if Mike stays over untill you get back?" I asked
"Fine."
new paragraph
As soon as my mom ~~she~~ left I stared at the mysterious trunk. Then I saw a littie key wondering that was in taped on to the trunk. I took it off and opened the trunk. A bright light shinned from it. Mike ~~Michael~~ noticed a stairway leading down into the trunk. We decided to go down into it. When we got to the bottom of the stairs the stairs dissappeared.
"Great now what are we going to do? ~~do we do?~~ ~~Mike~~ We're stuck here." Mike said.
Mike and Christine looked around and noticed everything had shrunk. Then they heard a

*Conventions*

Although spelling errors exist and occasionally detract from the writing, they do not reduce the clarity of communication. There are a few incorrect word choices such as "few" for "phew," and the writer is confused about the spelling of "though." In the case of "shinned," the writer incorrectly chose "shined" as the past tense of "shine" and then compounded the error with a misspelling.

Only minor punctuation errors exist, and these are mainly comma omissions in dialogue constructions and after introductory transitional expressions. Because of the simplicity of most of the sentences, one would not expect many punctuation errors.

*Planning and Drafting*

A few words summarize the writer's plan for the beginning, middle, and end of the story. This plan is too generic to apply specifically to the written draft. Some revisions and editing have been done to the draft so that the final writing flows more smoothly.

voice and it said, "Your mission is top go through the maze and kill the enemy's and then you can return to your home." Then the voice faded away.
"So, we, are in like a video game, or something?" I said trembling on every word.
"Come on. It will be fun." said Mike as he ran to the starting line.
At the beggining they found some weapons.
"Oh so this is what we use to kill the enemies?" I said.
"I guess so." said Mike.
Then we went. The maze was easy but it was hard to kill the enemies. Even thaugth everything was shrunk it still looked big. We were close to the end But then we had to fight a big prickly enemy. It was the only way to get back home. I knew because I saw the stairs behind him. Everytime I shot it made him fad alittle more and more. He was so faded that we ran right through him and we went up the stairs. When we got to the top of the trunk the trunk and the guns dissappeared.

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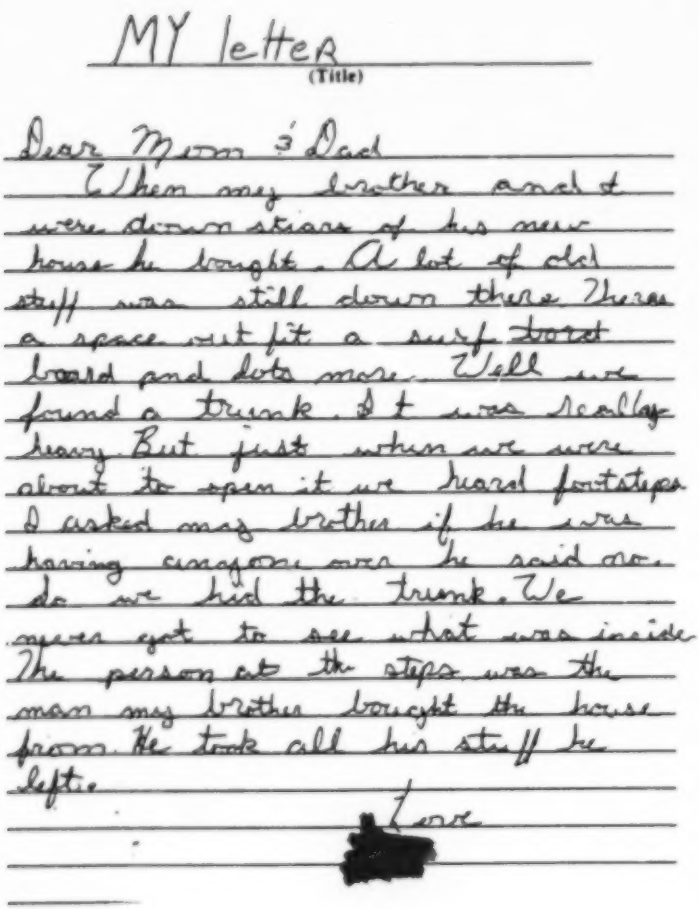
***Student Sample D***

This undeveloped, unembellished writing is representative of a **(2) Limited.**



MY letter
(Title)

Dear Mom & Dad

When my brother and I were down stairs of his new house he bought. A lot of old stuff was still down there. There a space suit fit a surf ~~boat~~ board and lots more. Well we found a trunk. It was really heavy. But just when we were about to open it we heard footsteps. I asked my brother if he was having company over he said no. So we hid the trunk. We never got to see what was inside. The person at the steps was the man my brother bought the house from. He took all his stuff he left in.

Love

[redacted]

*Content*

The vaguely established purpose of this piece seems to be simply that the writer became curious about the contents of the brother's basement. As plot motivation, this curiosity fails because it is never satisfied. There is no conflict or focus in the writing, so the writer is unable to develop any reader interest; when the man comes to take the trunk away, it is merely a random action rather than a resolution.

"A space outfit" and "surf board" relate directly to the writer's observation of the visual prompt. However, other details, such as "a lot of old stuff" and "lots more," are scant and vague.

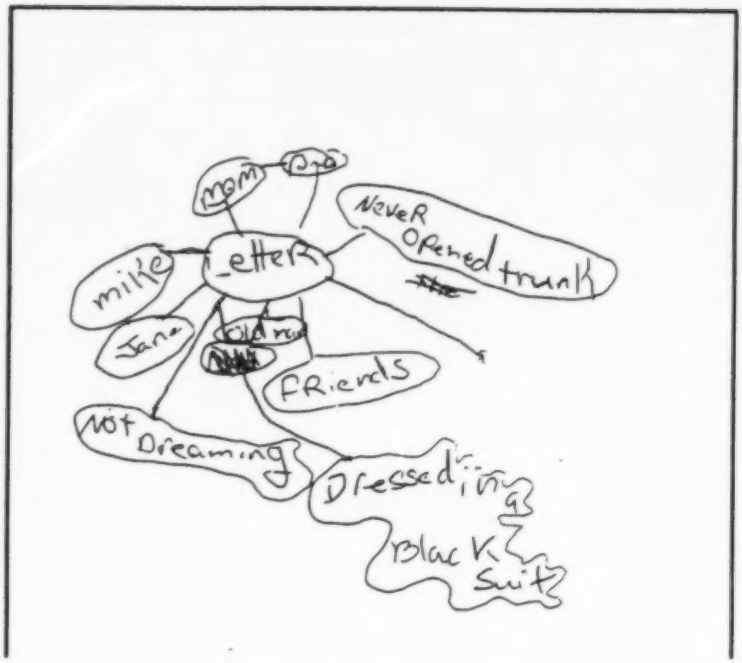
*Organization*

The salutation and complementary closing of the letter format automatically give the piece a formalized introduction and conclusion. Within the writing, however, the introductory sentences only vaguely establish a purpose and fail to develop a focus. Ideas are presented in a clear order through a mechanically stated series of simplistic events. Closure is presented when the man "took all his stuff" and left, but this closure is unsatisfying, not only in and of itself, but also because, with no focus or conflict in this story, there is nothing to resolve.

*Sentence Structure*

Sentence fragments and a run-on sentence occur in this writing but they do not impede meaning. Because there is almost no variation of sentence structure, the writer appears to maintain general

**IDEAS/PLANNING**




**FIRST DRAFT/ROUGH COPY**

Dear Mom, I had ~~who~~ Mike and ~~I~~ when Mike and my brother I were downstairs in his basement of the new house he bought. A lot of old stuff was still down there. There a space outfit a ~~for~~ surf board and lots more. Well we found a trunk. But just ~~was~~ when we were a bout to open it we heard footsteps I asked my if he was having anyone over he said no so we hid the trunk. We never got to open it. The person at the steps was the man my ~~m~~ brother bought the house from. He took all his stuff.

Love

control. The writing is made more ineffective by the author's plodding style of placing only one limited thought in each sentence.

*Vocabulary*

Limited vocabulary is used throughout the paper and is especially evident in the writer's use of "stuff," "lots," and "a lot." No attempt to make specific word choices is evident. Adjectives and adverbs are only general, such as "new," "old," and "really." Similarily, verbs are functional rather than vivid or well chosen.

*Conventions*

The brevity and simplicity of this response influence the limited number of convention errors. Since no attempt is made to use any punctuation other than periods, it is not surprising that punctuation omission errors occur. The lack of vocabulary risk is also notable.

*Planning and Drafting*

This writer makes use of a web primarily to represent the story's characters. Only one stem of the web, "never opened trunk," finds its way directly into the story action, while "not dreaming" does not figure in either the rough or finished drafts. Only minor revisions were made to the rough draft.

***Student Sample E***

This paper is difficult to read and to understand. Although the writer tries to tell a story, the plot lacks coherence. It is representative of a **(1) Poor**.

Carrie and Jimmys wild life.
(Title)

One day after school two kids have a sleep over. The explore the house and the go into the bassment. The same night as a week ago. When again they do hear food steps and don't run but hid this time. The foot steples do stop and the door opens To there surprise two men in black come down. They lift the trunk when Carrie caught the girl her when Jimmy hits them and runs. He sit down after with a bat when they were gone she were gone and the trunk was gone But they drop a map. Jimmy flowred the map and caught up with them and. Freead the girl when the man came after them Jimmy told her to run he got the trunk and ran. They were then caught and took to a island. The men were dum and let them get away with they did die. The book was not there after the got back and opened the trunk the knife they keeped but the weapon like bows the dad keeped in the safe and move to hawie and the kids got older and were kiddnapped agin. and took to cross bow Island and were let go they made a home there and were king there but when they were a peace people came be beg for money. The two king had three kids named Billy, mithew, and one girl Kim, with some animals a cat a dog a horse and Zebra. These parents came to live with them and the had the most interesting life in the world from grade 7 to grade 12 even university and the head a half a country and 7 moter bikes and they never had to worrie about bad guys agin. They hoo.

*Content*

This writing is frustrating for the reader, who must re-read some sections of the piece several times to discern the meaning. The purpose of the piece seems to be to tell the story of what happened to Carrie and Jimmy as a result of their decision to "explore the house and the go into the bassment." This purpose is not sustained as the writer recounts events spanning the children's lifetime, such as the second kidnapping, their lives as "king," and their educational histories.

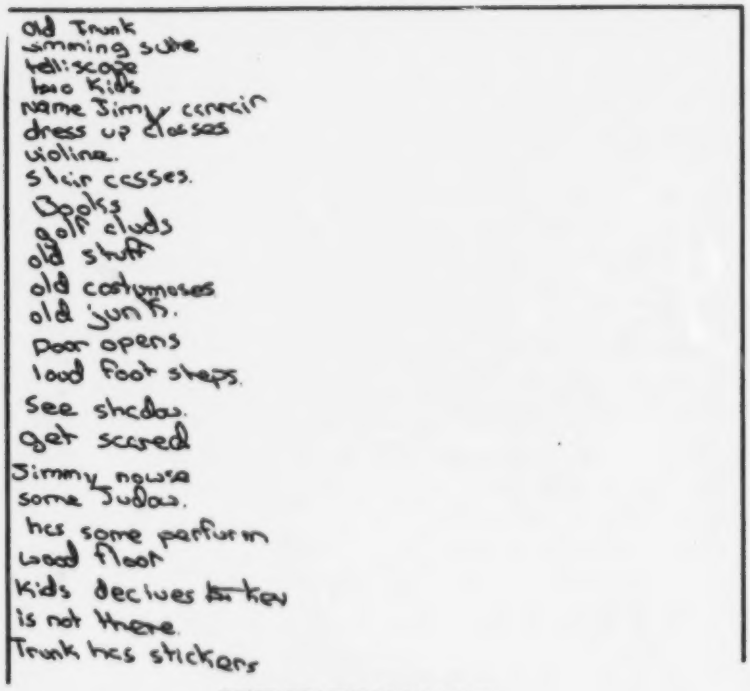
Events are not plausible within the story's structure. For example, at one point in the story it takes two men to lift the trunk, yet a short time later, the young boy is able to carry this same trunk single-handedly, while running. Details such as the "move to hawie," the list of animals, and "7 moter bikes," are inappropriate and confuse rather than advance the plot.

*Organization*

An introduction is attempted; however, because "When agin they do hear food steps" assumes knowledge of prior, unspecified events, the introduction is unfocused and confusing to the reader. A series of events is discernible, but transitions are lacking and details incoherent. In one run-on sentence, the children "got back" from their first kidnapping, dealt with their weapons, moved to Hawaii, grew older, and were "kiddnapped agin."

The conclusion is loosely linked to the story as the writer tries to add an ominous tone. After the kidnappings are resolved and a "happily ever after" scenario is presented, the writer tries, in

**IDEAS/PLANNING**


Old Trunk
winning subs
tell:scope
two Kids
name Jimy corecir
dress up clasos
violine.
Stair cesses.
Books
golf clubs
old stuff
old costumoses
old junk.
Door opens
loud foot steps
See shadow.
get scared
Jimmy nguse
some Judas.
hes some parfum
wood floor
Kids declues ~~to~~ kev
is not there
Trunk hes stickers

**FIRST DRAFT/ROUGH COPY**

One day after school two kids have a steppa over. They explore the house and go in bassement. The night after they heard foot steps Then the kids hear them again but they hid. In ~~stead~~ steded of going out the window when the foot steps stop the door opens. Two men in black come down to check the trunk out when Corrcir caught the men got them. They ~~went~~ went ~~went~~ where not fast and Jimmy hit them and ran after he went down with a bat the men the trunk and Esrrair were gone but the left ~~the~~ behide a map. Jimmy ~~flewed~~ flewed the map and caught up with theimen he got Esrrair away but did not call the ~~the~~ police because they will steal the trunk.

Two weeks after the ~~the~~ men got a a jacks hammen to break it open. The did until Jimmy hit them with wood. They were ~~hide~~ ded but the ~~bang~~ back was gone. Jimmy had a nife and made a house for them when the two men got untide they tride to get the treasur in the chest

the final sentence, to suggest that the troubles of the main characters may not actually be over. However, this attempt is not very effective because it follows immediately after what is supposed to be a description of the idyllic life the characters are enjoying but it is actually a tedious account of their children, animals, and education.

*Sentence Structure*

In this writing, control of sentence structure is generally lacking. Although the writer appears to have some sense of sentence elements, in order to get meaning from the story the reader must re-read to determine the beginnings and endings of sentences. In run-on sentences such as "The boat was not there . . . and were kiddnapped agin" the writer's meaning is severely impeded as several events are jumbled together. Although sentence fragments also appear in this writing, they are less of a problem than are the run-on sentences. Little variety of sentence type is used; an exception is the sentence "To there suprise two men in black come down," where the prepositional phrase is an effective beginning construction.

*Vocabulary*

General rather than specific words are used throughout this writing. With a few notable exceptions, such as "peace people" and "most interseting life," there are almost no descriptive adjectives or adverbs.

*Conventions*

Although frequent spelling errors detract from the writing, they are not as troublesome as the punctuation and grammar problems. This writer is unable to use punctuation to delineate thoughts or ideas. Periods are correctly used in some cases but not with consistency. The only

**FIRST DRAFT/ROUGH COPY**

when they did not suck seed the getecten by cnimals from the sea because they were no good. The kids got the trunk open and there was a glad and knifes in side it.

The kids did not give the parents the knifs but only the glad the kids lived on till big when to other men come. The ~~3~~ two peode ~~c~~ caught them and took them to cross ~~bo~~ Island. the people made a home but were scared. After the had a good life. and a good house with kids. Then Jimmy made a back and they all trswelled back to the city and had a very strongen life from grade 1 ~~s~~ to grade 12 and univesity was intersting too but when they two peode ~~s~~ got a job it all worked out. Jimmy ~~w~~ was a judo teacher and pilote and Carrie a docter with 3 kids and two cnimals a cat and dog. They had a ranch and ~~two~~ 7 motor bikes.

time commas appear—in the list "named Billy, Mattew, and one girl Kim, with some animals" —one is missing. No dialogue is attempted.

Incorrect verb choices such as "keeped" for "kept" and "took" for "taken" exist. Problems with tense are also evident. For example, although it happened in the past, the children "move to hawie." The sentence "The men were dum and let them get away wile they did die" indicates that the writer has difficulty controlling pronoun references.

*Planning and Drafting*

The long list on this Ideas/Planning page is made up of items found mainly in the picture that accompanied the writing prompt. Almost none of these items are found in either the rough or final draft. The rough draft contains more detail than the final draft, which is somewhat shortened.

## *Developmental Issues*

The papers in this booklet represent only a small sample of the writing that was produced by Grade 6 students for the June 1992 test. When students are learning to write, they gradually develop confidence and competence in their abilities to cope with very complex tasks. Each student's developmental pattern is unique, yet certain commonalties may be observed as students attempt to gain control over various elements of composition. In the Grade 6 papers, students took risks with their writing and experimented with a variety of writing techniques. Their efforts were not all entirely successful but must be viewed as an indication of their awareness of the range of possibilities open to them as writers. Teachers can help students in their fledgling attempts to incorporate new features into their writing through instruction in a meaningful context and through their continued support and encouragement. The following examples are offered for such uses.

Millions of jewels sparkled
well/ gold lit the cavern with
a golden radiance. They must have
been smugglers!
"Annie, come quick!" he shouted
After that, the police arrested
the men and the gold was returned to it's
rightfull owners.

Most students exhibited confidence in the development of their stories, but many did not seem to know how to end them. In this example, the children have surreptitiously followed two men who carried the trunk into a cave. After the men leave, "Jack" opens the trunk and then this excerpt ends the piece. There is no transition to explain what happened between the finding of the trunk and the arrest. Many students concluded their writing with an abrupt and/or contrived ending such as this.

"Ok I will go up stairs and see
what is going on you stay near"
Jadden said as he began up the
stairs. He walks slowly up the
stairs peaks around the conner
when he saw a goast of an old
man! He didn't know what to
do "who are you" he said in a
fried voice.

This excerpt typifies the problems some students have in using tense consistently. The writer begins the passage writing in past tense, changes to present tense with "walks" and "peaks," and then reverts to past tense. This confusion may partially result from attempting to write the story in the past tense while using present tense for dialogue within the story.

The two excerpts below demonstrate that most students realize the need to enhance their writing with the use of descriptive words or phrases. Their efforts were achieved with varying degrees of success.

"I dont l-like it here" sobbed Lisa
"Me either" cried Peter. Then they
both broke down, clung to each other
and cried. As their tears fell
onto the golden sand, they turned
into rubies. Lisa stopped crying,
mainly out of surprise, and
picked one up
Peter did the same. He held
it to the light. They gazed at each
other in awe. The desert sun
shone through the stones and
made them look like droplets of fire
They stared at the rubies.....
then they were ... spinning
turning · thump

In this passage, the writer creates a contrast in mood for effect. The strong verb choices "cried," "broke down," and "clung" create a picture of desperate children. This scene is sharply contrasted as the children's "surprise" and "awe" are described and as a feeling of comfort and mutual support is developed by the phrase "gazed at each other." The disconsulate mood is further dispelled through the use of warm images: "golden sand," "desert sun," and "droplets of fire."

The creaking floor boards
ii
indicated that someone was
coming downstairs. An old man
with a ~~patch~~ patch over one eye
came down. He gave the boy
a concerned look and ~~then~~
walked upstairs

Here, descriptors are adequate but unimaginative—"*creaking* floor boards," "an *old* man," and "a *concerned* look." An attempt to use language to create a sense of mystery is evident in the description of the old man as having "a patch over one eye." Although the writer's selection of verbs is generally commonplace, the choice of "indicated" is precise.



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Although most students developed some type of introduction, this aspect of their writing could not be considered strong. The most common problem was that introductions were too "sketchy" to adequately interest the reader or to set a purpose for the writing. On the other hand, some writers had trouble controlling long, tedious introductions. The four following excerpts demonstrate a range of students' treatment of introductions.

Thank Goodness for That Trunk!!!
(Title)

. It was Chris's idea and it was all his fault. He was the one who decided to explore the abandoned and haunted house in our neighborhood. He was the one that decided to start from the basement. Like I said before, it was all his fault. Anyway, Yet me begin my story.

Some students wrote very effective story openers. This introduction draws the reader into the story while also establishing a purpose for the writing. The repetition of "it was all his fault" and "He was the one" strengthens this writing by focusing our interest on both Chris ("He") and the story to come ("it"). It also sets a personal tone for the story and piques the reader's curiousity about the narrator, who, by insisting that the story to come is a result of Chris' idea and actions, implicates herself.

The Mysterious Trunk
(Title)

Dylan and Jason heard footsteps. They knew they had to get out of the house before the bullies came. They decided to open the trunk and hide in it. They opened it and jumped in just in time.

Here, the writer attempts to create interest and excitement by giving the main characters a narrow escape from danger early in the writing. However, this brief introduction erroneously assumes that the reader has prior knowledge regarding "the house" and the reason the two boys are in it. The same problem is seen with "the bullies," although the reader is given the impression that the boys have had previous experience with them and that they will figure significantly in the story. In fact, the "bullies" come into the basement, look around, leave, and are not referred to again as the plot develops around a tribe of cannnibals on a remote island.

The break in.
(Title)

Then suddenly a door opened. The kids where as scared as heck. They hid behind a wall Just then they saw... Some stranger they had never seen before.

There is no developed introduction in this example. The writer assumes that the prompt is sufficient and begins immediately with the action of the story. Markers were pleased to note that this was not apparent on most papers.

The oldmans wife.
(Title)

"This is a neat trunk," said Mat. "It sure is" answered Christee. Then the floor boards started to creek as an elderly man came downstairs. Mat and Christee hid.

This excerpt is typical of the many introductions that were not developed enough to draw the reader into the story. No information is given to explain where the children are, who the man is, or why the children feel compelled to hide from the man. Instead of feeling tension or suspense, the reader is left completely disinterested.

The mysterious trunk
(Title)

One day my friend John and I Lori were going for a walk down the main street's of sort mcmurray. As John and I were walking I stumbled over a brick which was right in front of a path.

John was a nosey kid so of course he wanted to follow it. Well I decided to go to.

The path lead to a big mysterious house that I have never seen before. The house sort of looked haunted but I didn't think so.

John started to walk up the stairs I asked him what he was doing he replid me with "I Just wanted to see" so he went on walking I did not stop him so he went in.

John found a case of stairs leading to a door John opened the door and walked in it was a basement. John called me in. his voice was full of excitement. John showed me a big blue trunk that had numbers of stickers on it some read Bombay, Paris Cairo, and sibertan express.

I saw a under water diving suit. that almost looked brand new I went on and found a big pink and white bony cosage with a big brown teddy bear in it.

Many students have difficulty isolating significant and/or interesting detail from superfluous information. This excerpt is representative of a considerable number of mid-range (2–3) papers that presented too much detail before getting to the main story. The events do not engage the reader, and most of the details selected are neither important nor do they further the plot. The only information significant to the rest of the story is that the children are in a particular town and that John is "a nosey kid." Following this excerpt, the writer relates how the two children travelled into the past and, in the conclusion, reveals that the entire story has been a dream.

Markers noticed several trends in the content of 1992 writing that distinguished it from previous years' writing.

"I knew we never should of broken into this house," said Bill, Julie's best friend. In the moments before they had broken into this un-inhabited house and climbed down the stairs into the wine celler be they now claimed as their own. With the smell of wine in the air they had found a chest, with incantations carved into the weekend old ivory. And now they heard footsteps above, winding slowly towards them, falling like the sand in the hourglass.

As demonstrated by this excerpt, writers at all stages of proficiency consistently exhibited little sense of ownership, privacy, or personal property. Children in these stories went into strangers' homes, rummaged through private articles in other people's trunks, and used anything they wanted regardless of where they found it. If they found or helped to retrieve valuables, they usually got to keep everything they found and thereby became wealthy.

Laura said Yah, but will it be okay with your mom if we go down there? David said that his mom told him not to go down there. But then he thought for a second. He said but my mom is gone to the store so we can go.

This writer is typical of many whose characters demonstrated a disregard for the externally imposed regulations. In this case, the rule was made by the mother, but the same trend was seen with rules made by others such as grandparents, the police, and owners of the house or trunk.

One beautiful afternoon Jery invited Melony over to his house to explore his eerie and mysterious basement. Though Jery had always carried around an uneasy feeling about his basement, he was always very anxious to look through some of the antiques that were sitting in his basement for years.

In many of the mid-range stories, children found a trunk after sneaking into the basements of their own homes or found an old, dusty trunk that had not moved for years but which they had never seen before. In these cases, credibility of the stories was often lost when writers failed to explain why they were not allowed in their own basements or how they came to miss seeing the trunk at earlier times. In this excerpt, Jery initiates an exploration of the basement he has lived above for 10 years and about which he has always felt uneasy.

# *Appendix*

**Grade 6 English Language Arts Achievement Test**

***Part A: Composition***

Scoring Guide, June 1992

## REPORTING CATEGORY: CONTENT

When marking CONTENT,* the marker should consider

- the effectiveness of ideas/details/specifics chosen by the writer (as they relate to the format/type of the response)
- how effectively the purpose is achieved
- whether the reader's interest has been captivated and maintained

*CONTENT as is appropriate at the Grade 6 level.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 5 | EXCELLENT | • The writer's purpose, whether stated or implied, is clearly established and sustained.<br>• The ideas and/or details used by the writer to fulfill the assignment are usually effective, specific, and appropriate.<br>• Supporting details are precise and often creative.<br>• Such writing may be lively and/or imaginative. |
| 4 | PROFICIENT | • The writer's purpose, whether stated or implied, is established and generally sustained.<br>• The ideas and/or details used by the writer to fulfill the assignment are often effective, specific, and appropriate.<br>• Supporting details are relevant and well defined.<br>• Such writing may demonstrate an attempt to go beyond the basic requirements of the assignment. |
| 3 | SATISFACTORY | • The writer's purpose, whether stated or implied, is established but may not be sustained.<br>• The ideas and/or details used by the writer to fulfill the assignment are appropriate but conventional.<br>• Supporting details are relevant but general.<br>• Such writing fulfills the basic requirements of the assignment but does so matter-of-factly. |
| 2 | LIMITED | • The writer's purpose, whether stated or implied, is vaguely established and may not be sustained.<br>• The ideas and/or details used by the writer to fulfill the assignment are inappropriate and/or superficial.<br>• Supporting details are scant and/or vague and/or irrelevant.<br>• Such writing does not fulfill the assignment completely. |
| 1 | POOR | • The writer's purpose may be unclear; if a purpose is stated or implied, it is not sustained.<br>• Such writing shows a confused notion of what is required in the assignment.<br>• Details are inappropriate or lacking.<br>• Such writing may be frustrating for the reader. |
| INS | INSUFFICIENT | • The student has written so little that is not possible to assess the content OR the marker can discern no evidence of an attempt to fulfill the assignment. |

## REPORTING CATEGORY: ORGANIZATION

When marking ORGANIZATION,* the marker should consider how effectively the writing demonstrates

- focus
- coherent order
- connections between events and/or details
- closure

*ORGANIZATION as is appropriate at the Grade 6 level.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 5 | EXCELLENT | • The introduction is purposeful and interesting and clearly establishes an appropriate focus that is sustained throughout.<br>• Events and/or details are arranged in a purposeful and effective order, and coherence is maintained.<br>• Transitions, either explicit or implicit, effectively connect events and/or details.<br>• Closure is evident and purposeful. |
| 4 | PROFICIENT | • The introduction is purposeful and clearly establishes an appropriate focus that is generally maintained throughout.<br>• Events and/or details are arranged in a purposeful order, and coherence is generally maintained.<br>• Transitions, either explicit or implicit, appropriately connect events and/or details.<br>• Closure is related to the focus. |
| 3 | SATISFACTORY | • The introduction is functional and establishes a focus that may be inconsistently maintained.<br>• Events and/or details are arranged in a discernible order, although coherence may falter from time to time.<br>• Transitions may be missing in places or may not be appropriate.<br>• Closure is mechanical or artificial. |
| 2 | LIMITED | • The introduction may lack purpose and/or may not be functional; any focus established by the writer may not be maintained.<br>• Purposeful arrangement of events and/or details is not clearly discernible, and coherence falters frequently.<br>• Transitions are rarely used.<br>• Closure may be unrelated to the focus. |
| 1 | POOR | • The introduction, if present, is not functional or is inappropriate; no focus is established.<br>• The arrangement of events and/or details is haphazard and incoherent.<br>• Transitions are lacking or are used inappropriately.<br>• Closure is inappropriate, unconnected, or missing. |
| INS | INSUFFICIENT | • The writing has been awarded and INS for CONTENT. |

## REPORTING CATEGORY: SENTENCE STRUCTURE

When marking SENTENCE STRUCTURE,* the marker should consider

•the degree to which the writer frames grammatically correct sentences
•the effectiveness and variety of sentence type and length

*SENTENCE STRUCTURE as is appropriate at the Grade 6 level.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 5 | EXCELLENT | • Sentence structure is effectively and consistently controlled.<br>• Sentence type and length are effective and varied; run-on sentences and/or sentence fragments, if used, are used successfully for effect. |
| 4 | PROFICIENT | • Sentence structure is controlled.<br>• Sentence type and length are usually effective and varied; run-on sentences and/or sentence fragments, if used, may not be used successfully for effect but do not impede meaning. |
| 3 | SATISFACTORY | • Sentence structure is generally controlled.<br>• Sentence type and length are sometimes effective and varied; run-on sentences and/or fragments, if used, occasionally impede meaning. |
| 2 | LIMITED | • Control of sentence structure is sometimes lacking.<br>• Sentence type and length are rarely effective and varied; run-on sentences and/or sentence fragments, if used, often impede meaning. |
| 1 | POOR | • Control of sentence structure is generally lacking.<br>• There is no deliberate variation of sentence type or length; run-on sentences and/or sentence fragments, if used, severely impede meaning. |
| INS | INSUFFICIENT | • The writing has been awarded and INS for CONTENT. |

## REPORTING CATEGORY: VOCABULARY

When marking VOCABULARY,* the marker should consider

•the effectiveness and accuracy of the words and expressions selected by the writer

*VOCABULARY as is appropriate at the Grade 6 level.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 5 | EXCELLENT | • Specific words and expressions are carefully selected with an awareness of connotative effect.<br>• Words are used accurately and deliberately to fulfill the purpose. |
| 4 | PROFICIENT | • Specific words and expressions show some evidence of careful selection and some awareness of connotative effect.<br>• Words are used accurately and often effectively. |
| 3 | SATISFACTORY | • General words and expressions are sometimes used where specific words would have been more effective.<br>• Words are generally used accurately. |
| 2 | LIMITED | • General rather than specific words predominate.<br>• Specific words, if present, are frequently misused. |
| 1 | POOR | • General words that convey only vague meanings are used. |
| INS | INSUFFICIENT | • The writing has been awarded and INS for CONTENT. |

## REPORTING CATEGORY: CONVENTIONS

When marking CONVENTIONS,* the marker should consider the extent to which the writer has control of

•mechanics (spelling, punctuation, capitalization, etc.)
•grammar (agreement of subject-verb/pronoun-antecedent, pronoun reference, etc.)

**PROPORTION OF ERROR TO LENGTH AND COMPLEXITY OF RESPONSE MUST BE CONSIDERED.**

*CONVENTIONS as are appropriate at the Grade 6 level.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 5 | EXCELLENT | • The writing is essentially free from errors in spelling, punctuation, and grammar.<br>• Any errors that are present do not reduce the clarity of the communication. |
| 4 | PROFICIENT | • The writing has few errors in spelling, punctuation, and grammar.<br>• Errors that are present seldom reduce the clarity of the communication. |
| 3 | SATISFACTORY | • The writing has occasional errors in spelling, punctuation, and grammar.<br>• Some of these errors sometimes reduce the clarity of the communication. |
| 2 | LIMITED | • The writing has frequent errors in spelling, punctuation, and grammar.<br>• Some of these errors often reduce the clarity of the communication. |
| 1 | POOR | • The writing has numerous errors in spelling, punctuation, and grammar that are both noticeable and jarring.<br>• Most of these errors severely reduce the clarity of the communication. |
| INS | INSUFFICIENT | • The writing has been awarded and INS for CONTENT. |